

IMPACT OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM ON MARITAL RELATIONSHIP

Artur Rada

Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tirana, Tirana, Albania,
E mail: arturrada@yahoo.com

Abstract

According to recent studies children with autism have impact on marital relationships. As result of the problems created by the children with autism the couples are subject to stress. The stress is associated not only to child's problems but to financial situation and changes in the functionality of the family as well. Also the spouses have less time for each other. In most of the cases the conflicts and problems between parents are intensified due to children with autism. However, in some other cases the practice showed that dealing with children with autism might have even a positive impact on marital relationships. *Aim:* The aim of the study was to explore the experiences of the parents on the impact that children with autism had on their marital relationships. The qualitative research method was used in the study. In-depth, semi-structured interview was the instrument for data collections. Data collections were made possible by interviewing of 32 parents of children with autism (mothers and fathers), who were outpatients and inpatients at National Centre for Growth, Development and Rehabilitation of Children, Tirana, Albania. (i) Children with autism have a negative impact on marital relationships. For less than half of the cases, parents of children with autism were often subject of discussions and conflicts that were related to the fact who was going to take care for the child, their treatments and their expenses as well. Due to these difficulties some of the parents were seriously thinking about the divorce and in few cases they were divorced as well; (ii) As result of the continued engagement and long working hours, which applied to both spouses, they had difficulties to make time for each other; (iii) In less than half of the cases the parents were expressed that the impact that children with autism had on their marital relationship was positive since now their relationship was stronger. The parents thought if they stayed together and supported each other they will be more helpful to their child and even hope for bigger improvement regarding the child's health.

Keywords: *children with autism, marital relationships*